

Elite Opponents

Dire Wolves

By Andy Collins



This column aims to provide DMs with interesting opponents to pit against the PCs in their campaigns. Building off of a simple base -- typically a standard monster from the *Monster Manual* -- each column uses the building blocks provided in the rulebooks to craft a variety of foes. Through the addition of class levels or templates, or even via simple HD advancement, the creatures presented in this column are transformed from run-of-the-mill opponents into memorable foes. Check out this column every month for formidable enemies built from a different monster!

Dire Wolf: Savagery Personified

This month, our base creature is the dire wolf. A relatively simple and straightforward creature, the dire wolf symbolizes the raw, unfettered power of nature. For players accustomed to more cunning monsters, its basic savagery can serve as a refreshing change of pace.

At CR 3, a single dire wolf makes a fine opponent for low-level PCs. Thanks to its size and high strength, its trip ability can easily knock down even a raging barbarian. A whole pack of dire wolves should be able to frighten parties of seasoned PCs who are used to fighting hill giants and similarly tough foes.

But this column isn't about the plain-vanilla dire wolf. It's about dire wolves in a variety of exciting flavors -- five, to be precise -- ranging in CR from 4 to 7. Each of the examples presented here can easily be upgraded in power by using the monster advancement rules in the *Monster Manual* or, in the case of the last two examples, by adding more class levels.

Celestial Dire Wolf

The celestial dire wolf traces its ancestry to the Upper Planes, including such realms as the Wilderness of the Beastlands or the Heroic Domains of Ysgard. Though it embodies the spirit of the noble hunter, this creature is not necessarily friendly to strangers. In fact, the celestial dire wolf is just as fiercely territorial as its mundane cousin.

At the DM's discretion, a paladin of 7th level or higher can select a celestial dire wolf as her special mount. To serve in this capacity, the celestial dire wolf must be either neutral good or lawful good in alignment. See "Mounts" on pages 204 and 205 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide* for more on this option.

Celestial Dire Wolf: CR 4; Large magical beast (augmented animal, extraplanar); HD 6d8+18; hp 45; Init +2; Spd 50 ft.; AC 14, touch 11, flat-footed 12; Base Atk +4; Grp +15; Atk +11 melee (1d8+10, bite); Space/Reach 10 ft./5 ft.; SA smite evil, trip; SQ acid resistance 5, cold resistance 5, damage reduction

5/magic, darkvision 60 ft., electricity resistance 5, low-light vision, scent, spell resistance 11; AL any good; SV Fort +8, Ref +7, Will +6; Str 25, Dex 15, Con 17, Int 3, Wis 12, Cha 10.

Skills and Feats: Hide +0, Listen +7, Move Silently +4, Spot +7, Survival +2 (+6 when tracking by scent); Alertness, Run, Track, Weapon Focus (bite).

Smite Evil (Su): Once per day, a celestial dire wolf can make a normal melee attack to deal an extra +6 points of damage against an evil foe.

Trip (Ex): A celestial dire wolf that hits with a bite attack can attempt to trip its opponent (+11 check modifier) as a free action without making a touch attack or provoking an attack of opportunity. If the attempt fails, the opponent cannot react to trip the celestial dire wolf.

Shadow Dire Wolf

The dimension known as the Plane of Shadow is home to warped, twisted versions of many familiar creatures. A naturally gifted hunter in its mundane form, the dire wolf becomes even more terrifying when infused with the essence of shadow. A shadow dire wolf can slip between dark places virtually invisibly, demonstrating a remarkable degree of stealth for a creature of its size.

This dire wolf uses the shadow creature template from *Manual of the Planes*, updated as per the [3.5 Accessory Update](#).

Shadow Dire Wolf: CR 4; Large magical beast (augmented animal); HD 6d8+18; hp 45; Init +2; Spd 75 ft.; AC 14, touch 11, flat-footed 12; Base Atk +4; Grp +15; Atk +11 melee (1d8+10, bite); Full Atk +11 melee (1d8+10, bite); Space/Reach 10 ft./5 ft.; SA trip; SQ cold resistance 11, darkvision 60 ft., evasion, low-light vision, scent, shadow blend; AL N; SV Fort +8, Ref +7, Will +6; Str 25, Dex 15, Con 17, Int 2, Wis 12, Cha 10.

Skills and Feats: Hide +0, Listen +7, Move Silently +10, Spot +7, Survival +2 (+6 when tracking by scent); Alertness, Run, Track, Weapon Focus (bite).

Trip (Ex): A shadow dire wolf that hits with a bite attack can attempt to trip its opponent (+11 check modifier) as a free action without making a touch attack or provoking an attack of opportunity. If the attempt fails, the opponent cannot react to trip the shadow dire wolf.

Evasion (Ex): If exposed to any effect that normally allows a character to attempt a Reflex saving throw for half damage, a shadow dire wolf takes no damage with a successful saving throw.

Shadow Blend (Su): In any conditions other than full daylight, a shadow dire wolf can disappear into the shadows, gaining total concealment. Artificial illumination, even a *light* or *continual flame* spell, does not negate this ability. A *daylight* spell, however, does.

Trip (Ex): A shadow dire wolf that hits with a bite attack can attempt to trip its opponent (+11 check modifier) as a free action without making a touch attack or provoking an attack of opportunity. If the attempt

fails, the opponent cannot react to trip the shadow dire wolf.

Two-Headed Dire Wolf

From Cerberus to the hydra, mythology is replete with examples of ferocious multiheaded creatures. This dire wolf uses the multiheaded creature template from *Savage Species* to capture the essence of the two-headed beast. With two powerful bite attacks (each one capable of tripping an opponent), it can shred an unwary party in short order. A pack of these horrific beasts should send most characters running for their lives.

Two-Headed Dire Wolf: CR 5; Large magical beast (augmented animal); HD 8d8+32; hp 68; Init +6; Spd 50 ft.; AC 15, touch 11, flat-footed 13; Base Atk +6; Grp +17; Atk +13 melee (1d8+7, bite); Full Atk +13 melee (1d8+7, 2 bites); Space/Reach 10 ft./5 ft.; SA trip; SQ darkvision 90 ft., low-light vision, scent; AL N; SV Fort +10, Ref +8, Will +7; Str 25, Dex 15, Con 19, Int 2, Wis 12, Cha 10.

Skills and Feats: Hide +0, Listen +9, Move Silently +4, Search -2, Spot +9, Survival +4 (+8 when tracking by scent); Alertness, Combat Reflexes, Improved Initiative, Run, Track, Weapon Focus (bite).

Trip (Ex): A two-headed dire wolf that hits with a bite attack can attempt to trip its opponent (+11 check modifier) as a free action without making a touch attack or provoking an attack of opportunity. If the attempt fails, the opponent cannot react to trip the two-headed dire wolf.

Splitfang: The Dire Wolf Barbarian

A casual observer might give a dire wolf credit for more intellect than its statistics would imply. After all, its cunning and pack mentality suggest an intelligence beyond that of the common animal. In fact, it is no more intelligent than any other predatory animal, but if a dire wolf did gain humanlike intelligence, it might become a creature like Splitfang.

Once the animal companion of a powerful druid, Splitfang was given her freedom, and her intelligence, as a reward for years of loyal service. Now she roams the forest hunting those who would defile it.

Splitfang: Female awakened elite dire wolf barbarian 1; CR 6; Large magical beast (augmented animal); HD 8d8+40 plus 1d12+5; hp 87; Init +7; Spd 60 ft.; AC 16, touch 13, flat-footed 13; Base Atk +7; Grp +20; Atk +16 melee (1d8+13, bite); Full Atk +16 melee (1d8+13, bite); Space/Reach 10 ft./5 ft.; SA trip; SQ fast movement, illiteracy, low-light vision, rage 1/day, scent; AL N; SV Fort +13, Ref +9, Will +8; Str 29, Dex 17, Con 21, Int 10, Wis 14, Cha 12.

Skills and Feats: Hide +1, Listen +11, Move Silently +5, Spot +8, Survival +12 (+16 when tracking by scent); Alertness, Improved Initiative, Run, Track, Weapon Focus (bite).

Trip (Ex): If Splitfang hits with a bite attack, she can attempt to trip her opponent (+13 check modifier) as a free action without making a touch attack or provoking an attack of opportunity. If the attempt fails, the

opponent cannot react to trip Splitfang.

Rage: While Splitfang rages, the following changes apply to the above statistics: HD 8d8+56 plus 1d12+7; hp 105; AC 14, touch 11, flat-footed 11; Grp +22; Atk +18 melee (1d8+16, bite); Full Atk +18 melee (1d8+16, bite); SV Fort +15, Will +10; Str 33, Con 25. Her fit of rage lasts for 10 rounds. Splitfang may voluntarily end her rage prematurely. After raging, she is fatigued (-2 Strength, -2 Dexterity, can't charge or run) for the duration of that encounter. Splitfang can fly into a rage only once per encounter and only once per day. Entering a rage takes no time by itself, but she can do it only during her action, not in response to someone else's action.

Possessions: *Collar of protection +1* (as ring; occupies necklace position).

Firronal: Tauric Dire Wolf Ranger

Our final example uses the tauric template first published in *Monster Manual II*. Firronal, a 3rd-level ranger, uses dire wolf as the base creature and human as the base humanoid for the template. A bizarre hybrid being, Firronal finds solace neither among humanity nor among the dire wolves. Thus, he leads a lonely existence, caught between civilization and savagery.

Firronal: Tauric human-dire wolf ranger 3; CR 7; Large monstrous humanoid (augmented animal); HD 7d8+21 plus 3d8+9; hp 75; Init +6; Spd 50 ft.; AC 16, touch 12, flat-footed 14; Atk +16/+11 melee (1d8+11, +1 *quarterstaff*, two-handed) or +14/+9 melee (1d8+8, +1 *quarterstaff*) and +14 melee (1d8+4, +1 *quarterstaff*); Space/Reach 10 ft./5 ft.; SA trip; SQ combat style (two-weapon combat), favored enemy (orcs +2), low-light vision, scent, wild empathy +3; AL NE; SV Fort +11, Ref +10, Will +8; Str 25, Dex 15, Con 17, Int 11, Wis 14, Cha 10.

Skills and Feats: Hide +7, Listen +13, Move Silently +11, Spot +13, Survival +12 (+16 when tracking by scent); Alertness, Endurance, Improved Initiative, Run, Track, [Two-Weapon Fighting], Weapon Focus (*quarterstaff*).

Trip (Ex): If Firronal hits with a bite attack, he can attempt to trip his opponent (+11 check modifier) as a free action without making a touch attack or provoking an attack of opportunity. If the attempt fails, the opponent cannot react to trip Firronal.

Combat Style: Firronal has selected two-weapon combat as his combat style. He gains the benefits of the Two-Weapon Fighting feat when wearing light or no armor.

Favored Enemy: Firronal has selected orcs as a favored enemy. He gains a +2 bonus on his Bluff, Listen, Sense Motive, Spot, and Survival checks when using these skills against this kind of creature. He gets the same bonus on weapon damage rolls against orcs.

Wild Empathy (Ex): Firronal can make a check to improve the attitude of an animal that he has studied for 1 minute. He gains a +3 bonus on the check against an animal or a -1 penalty against a magical beast with an Intelligence of 1 or 2.

Possessions: *Large +1/+1 quarterstaff, bracers of armor +1, ring of protection +1, potion of cure serious wounds, potion of cat's grace, gold bracelet (500 gp).*

About the Author

By day, Andy Collins works as a senior designer in the Roleplaying R&D department at Wizards of the Coast, Inc. His credits include the *Player's Handbook* v.3.5, the *Epic Level Handbook*, and the upcoming *Draconomicon*. By night, however, he fights crime as a masked vigilante. Or maybe not.

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